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TO DISLEY WITH THE FIELD NATURALISTS.

The wandering herbalist, who, clear alike
From vain, and that worse evil, vexing thoughts,
Casts on these uncouth forms a slight regard
Of transitory interest, and peeps round
For some rare flowret of the hills, or plant
Of craggy fountain; what he hopes for, wins,
Or learns, at least, that 'tis not to be won;
Then, keen and eager, as a fine-nosed hound
By soul-engrossing instinct driven along
Through wood or open field, the harmless man
Departs, intent upon his onward quest—WORDSWORTH.

THE Manchester Field Naturalists took their final trip for the year on Saturday last—their destination, Disley. The bright beauty of an autumn morning revived within us those holiday yearnings which the continual rain of the so-called summer months had almost washed out; and a desire to know how it fared with our "specimen" gathering friends induced us to present ourselves at the London Road Station, in time for the 2 15 train. Having exchanged the sum of one shilling for a return ticket at the window of the excursion office of the London and North-Western Railway, we directed our steps to the platform from which the train was to start, and, lured by a gleam of tin cases, attached ourselves to the exploring party.

The first great attraction of an excursion to Disley is the extreme brevity of the ride thither. We seem to be at Heaton Norris and Stockport almost before we have left Manchester, and then, in a twinkling, find that we have exchanged monotonous plains, defaced with dingy houses and tall chimneys, for a pleasant hilly country with an air of rural freshness. The ordinary excursionist finds three other attractions in Lyme Hall, Lyme Park, and the Ram's Head Hotel, and divides his time pretty equally between these, giving the preponderance perhaps to the hotel. Lyme Hall is, indeed, well worth a visit. There is a good description of it in Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*, in which work the curious in such matters will also find a genealogical account of the Leghs, who have for many generations possessed the estate. This estate was originally bestowed upon Sir Thomas Danyers, as a reward for signal services rendered to the Black Prince in the battle of Creçy. The third husband of this good knight's daughter was a Legh, and through him it was inherited by that family. The church and graveyard, which are picturesquely situated, are also interesting. In addition to its architectural attractions, Disley is a starting-place for a great number of charming walks. Romantic valleys tempt the pedestrian to lengthened rambles, while, from the summit of the surrounding eminences, landscapes of vast extent and varied interest and beauty are spread out before him. Every lane and gateway, every dell and landmark, and we might add every flower and blade of glass in the locality, are known to the Society's secretary, Mr. Grindon, whose absence on Saturday, owing to illness, was matter of especial regret. It was understood that he was represented by the Rev. J. Freeston, a botanist of some local celebrity.

The Field Naturalists, whose studies are supposed to be devoted principally to Nature, had made no arrangements through the leader of the excursion, Mr. Fielden, for visiting Lyme Hall, or that other architectural notoriety, called Lyme Cage, situated on a bare green hill, and said to have been built as a hunting tower for the convenience of the ladies. Their first visit was paid to the hotel, in order to adjust the necessary details for supplying the prospective wants of internal Nature. While the party was artistically grouped about the doorway of the Ram's Head—an agreeable and quaint-looking public-house, by the way—we took the opportunity of estimating its numerical strength. There were about thirty-one persons, the fair sex being in a decided minority, which latter fact seemed to promise well for botany. For our own part, we patiently waited the signal to march; but one or two of the members seemed to know a trick worth two of that, and quietly skedaddled. This was a pity, as their presence during the walk might have proved useful to less talented members. There was a time when such desertions would have been considered a gross breach of the etiquette of the society: but the hand which grasped the reins of discipline has grown weak.

The walk began with a stroll over Jackson's Edge. Passing through a gateway, which was adorned with the most curious mechanical contrivance for closing a gate we have ever beheld, we gained the summit of the eminence. A descending mist obscured the more distant parts of the view, but that which was disclosed to us was singularly fine. Beneath us, and round the corner of the hill towards New Mills on our right, stretched the Strines Valley. Away on our left lay the wide-spreading plain on which stands Manchester. Before us rose Marple Ridge and a range of hills, spreading out from a yet higher range half hidden in the distance. Three steeples adorned the slopes opposite to us, the square tower of Marple Church being the centre and topmost one. A little below we could discern the clump of trees near which stands the birthplace of the Roundhead Bradshaw. It is pleasant to think that such delightful landscapes lie so near our smoky home. Continuing along Jackson's Edge, the Field Naturalists "curled round by the stone quarries"—to use the words of Mr. Grindon—and presently arrived amidst a cluster of blackberry bushes. Here some brisk botanizing took place, but few "specimens" were collected.

Striking off in the direction of Middlewood, the party shortly after became straggling, and at length separated into three groups. Keeping with what seemed to us to be the head of the forces, we had a pleasant walk through green fields and wooded dingles. A disused shaft of a coal-pit received considerable attention from many botanists, surmises as to its depth affording a subject for much interesting discussion. The principles of sound were also studied in a round tunnel beneath the railway, through which flowed a stream. Arriving at the confines of Lyme Park, where was a signboard indicating the distance to a locality bearing the poetic name of Pot-Shrigley, a further split took place, one division returning by the path across the railway, and the other, of which we formed an insignificant item, crossing the fine glades of Lyme Park, and thence by the road to the hotel. At the tea-table a complete reunion took place.

During the ramble, as far as our opportunities enabled us to judge, an astonishing ignorance of botanical science was displayed by the members of the Society: so great indeed, that we felt tempted to think, that if anyone wished to join the company of people who knew the least concerning the vegetable kingdom, it would be desirable for him to accompany the Field Naturalists during an excursion. We had a most enjoyable afternoon. The company was agreeable, the weather charming, the character of the country all that could be wished. But still we were not happy. The title of the Society hung over us like a shadow. Had we been called the Racy Ramblers, or the Fortnightly Strollers, we should have known what to do, and should have been content. But under the circumstances we felt that we were in the neighbourhood of Disley to botanize; botanize we ought to do, and botanize we must. Several of the members did exhibit a desire to gain knowledge, and to the best of our ability we imparted a fact or two to these. But if Wordsworth's "Wandering Herbalist" was represented at all, the "Harmless Man" must have wandered away on a solitary quest. Where, we wondered, were the president, and the vice-presidents, and all the other gentlemen whose names adorn the title-page of the report? It seems to us that the majority of these gentlemen are, so far as the Society is concerned, "sweet nothings." We at least have been unable hitherto to enjoy much more than the fragrance of their names. We do not wish to be too hard upon the executive council. Its representative did his utmost to save appearances, and after tea two addresses were delivered. Personally we were much indebted to the Rev. J. Freeston, who delivered the first, for his gallant attempt to say something which would prove interesting and instructive. During the reverend gentleman's walk he had collected a few specimens; amongst the rest one of the Gentian family, the *chlora perfoliata*, remarkable as an instance of the stalk of the plant passing through the leaf, a branch of the Guelder Rose in fruit, and one of the Horsetail Family. On these and a few

others he discoursed for awhile, as if mainly anxious to say something. The address may have been interesting as a display of Mr. Freeston's knowledge and impromptu powers, but was far from supplying the place of the short, but definite and exhaustive paper on the locality visited, which, some time ago, we recommended the executive council to provide. To those present it was comparatively useless.

Our sentiments were apparently shared by the second speaker, Mr. Charles Bailey, whose opening remarks partook very much of the character of a censure, and an upholding of the superiority of the Scientific Students' Association. This gentleman's advice was admirable. He counselled the Society to select one special object of study for each excursion. The members would then be able during the walk to look out for whatever might bear upon the selected subject, and the paper and discussion, which would conclude the afternoon's enjoyment, would concentrate the knowledge gained, and impart to it a tangible form. Giving an appropriate turn to his observations, the speaker called the attention of the assembly to the falling leaves, and doubtless astonished many of the people present by acquainting them with the fact that it is not the rude wintry blast which tears these from the parent tree, but that—their time being come and their service rendered—they gently and noiselessly release their hold and descend to the ground, to become changed and serve other uses. Botany is a poetical science.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

[SECOND NOTICE.]

SURELY, of all the ill-treated persons in this world, the critic is the worst used. Every man's hand is against him—that is, if he be an honest critic. He has duties to discharge of the most onerous nature, which he is under a perpetual temptation to shirk, and he is unpopular in exact proportion to the faithfulness with which those duties are discharged. The critic has his pleasures, certainly; but they are out of all proportion to his pains. Unhappily, the call for stricture is so much more frequent than the call for praise, that the distasteful portion of his business is the one which he has oftenest to attend to. It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that it is very easy to sit in one's seat and find fault. There is nothing harder. No one gives the critic credit for the violent constraint he often has to put upon himself to speak the truth, and yet, for all that, an unfavourable criticism often gives as much pain to the critic as the person criticized.

The theory of the critic's duty is as simple as its practice is arduous. It is his plain duty to entirely disregard the feelings of the person he is criticizing. The instant that the critic begins to reflect upon the consequences of his judgment, he is being tempted to play false with his judicial functions. The duty of the person criticized is equally plain, and perhaps almost as difficult to perform, namely, to take the criticism in good part, on no account to be offended at it, to compare it with his own ideas and with other criticisms, to decide between them to the best of his ability, and to carry that decision into action, whether it confirms or alters what he did before. Such is the theory, but it never can be completely carried out. The critic will keep fearing he is hurting somebody's feelings, or injuring somebody's prospects, and somebody's feelings will persist in being hurt. Probably, there will never be a very friendly feeling in the actor towards the critic, though there be the friendliest feeling on the other side. And, certainly, the actor is in the most galling plight in this, that he has no reply. It must be very aggravating to be censured, say, for wearing something which you didn't want to wear, but which you were compelled to do by the stage manager. In circumstances such as these, poor human nature may be pardoned just a little temper. As the actor has no answer to the critic, it is not surprising he should give the critic a sly kick whenever he is uppermost. To this natural feeling must be ascribed the quotation by Mr. Calvert in the preface to his version of this play, of Pope's—"Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss." (For "writes" read "acts.") We can't agree with Mr. Alexander Pope, but certainly he had a perfect right to state his views, and Mr. Calvert has a perfect right to quote them. We don't see why critics shouldn't be criticized as well as anybody else.

But Mr. Calvert's neat quotation has turned out singularly inappropriate. The criticisms on his latest effort have, with one conspicuous exception, been unusually good. And what is more, they have been generally taken by the persons criticized in the spirit in which they were written. The consequence of this joint excellence has been a great improvement in the play. It is quite possible that, had no critics written, the improvements would have taken place the same, but it is hardly probable. To take an instance: Mr. Archer, whose performance was not what it ought to be, was treated very mildly by the critics. Mr. Archer has improved about the least. But Mr. Archer does, at any rate, now speak his lines, with some exceptions, as verse should be spoken. He is not nearly so off-hand as on the first night, though he still should dwell upon some lines a little more, to bring the music out of them. His stiffness is his greatest fault, and in the case of him and Mr. Warde the whisker difficulty has not been triumphantly surmounted. Mr. Warde has, with a wise discretion, given up the Irish labourer's beard which first disfigured him, but still his make-up is not satisfactory; whilst Antonio's moustache and beard are something dreadful. In the art of making themselves up young actors miss it, and in several instances it would have been as well if Mr. Alfred Thompson had designed the hair as well as the apparel. Mr. Warde has also rid his action of its gross extravagance, and now makes a somewhat better Bassanio. To Mr. Vandenhoff likewise belongs the credit of not being too proud to mend. Restraining himself, though with obvious difficulty, he now shows to more advantage than he did when he was more conspicuous. All these three gentlemen have proved that they were worth the strictures which were passed upon them. Mr. Forrester's Old Gobbo, Mr. Barrett's Duke, and the quaint Hunchback are all satisfactory performances, the Hunchback being particularly good. That Miss Carlisle has only partially improved as Portia is no fault of hers. She is in the awkward plight of having on her hands a part for which she should not have been cast. Mr. Vaughan played curious havoc with the text when last we saw him, but Lorenzo is at any rate unobjectionable in his keeping, as is Jessica in that of Miss Deitz. Mr. Calvert's Shylock must be classed amongst his best impersonations, but we think his pauses are too frequent and too long, and he protracts his exits painfully. Still, his performance is the even execution of a dignified conception of the part.

The scenery has now attained more like its proper level in relation to the actors. The carpenters still seem to be enjoying themselves famously behind the scenes, and occasionally one hears voices that one thinks one recognizes; but we dare say it is difficult to keep a hundred people silent, and particularly when at least one-half of them are ladies. Whilst admiring greatly the grand picture of the Square, we cannot help recording our astonishment that painters who can paint such pictures are content with so feeble a representation of the sky as half a dozen blue cloths perpendicularly hung. The greatest charm of this scene is the pavement, as amongst the best effects of good interiors are the ceilings. Managers are only just beginning to cover up their stage: they have not yet begun to cover up their flies; but in these days of vaunted scenery we must have perfection. Let the painters look to it. Whilst in the carping vein, we must object to the outrageous number of processions introduced into the piece. Processions are a bore: and we defy the most enthusiastic champion of accessories to justify the fourth scene upon any grounds of art. If it is, after all, only an exigency of the carpenters, we suppose it must be endured, but it is a great infliction. A scene like this makes one exclaim, "Oh, monstrous! But one halfpenny worth of Shakespere to this intolerable deal of Alfred Thompson!"

Upon the whole, however, the accessories have taken up a more subordinate position than they did at first; and as the acting strengthens, it is better able to surmount them. Everyone at all acquainted with the dramatic art must acquiesce in the necessity of re-arranging Portia's scenes and Shylock's as they have been re-arranged by Mr. Calvert. To argue that on the alternate system usually adopted, the two stories are developed side by side, and that so literary art is best observed, is to argue like a woman. It is not a work of merely literary art that is in question, but a drama; and the first essential of a drama is, that it shall be adapted for the stage. That the heroine is not introduced until so late a period, and then to the exclusion of the previous interest, is a responsibility which rests upon the author for attempting to combine two plots that no more mix than oil and water, and are only forced into each other by the hideous device of dressing women in men's clothes—a horror tolerated only in

burlesque and Shakespere. Every one of his three female characters in this piece does the author put into men's clothes. And yet they say the drama has declined!

We have ere this given it as our opinion, that the one thing necessary to complete the Prince's Theatre is a good stock actress. Now the opportunity of getting one has come, we hope the management will seize it. Miss Rose Coghlan is the best material that they have had in their stock company for many a day. Who Miss Coghlan is, whether she is any relation of the excellent young Mr. Coghlan, of the London Prince of Wales's theatre, or where she comes from, we are ignorant. It is enough for us that she is here. Her Nerissa may not be the Nerissa of Shakespere, but it is an admirably rounded execution of her own idea. The oftener one sees it, the more one is struck by its perfect finish and its spirit. Gifted with a good clear voice, a pretty face, a figure, knowledge how to set both off, a ladylike demeanour, an unusual grace of movement, and a merry smile, we know of no one who is so exactly what the theatre wants. With a nonchalance as great as Mr. Sothern's she unites a marvellous amount of grace. To see her sail about the stage in her delightful costume as Nerissa, is a sight more gratifying than all the scenery that Mr. Calvert ever put upon his boards. Beside a bit of genuine acting, all this talk about the huge importance of accessories shrivels into nothing. Mr. Calvert's judgment in selecting her should be acknowledged, and we trust he will confirm it by retaining her. It is only one woman in a thousand who knows how to walk, and when that one is found she should not be lost sight of. It is long since Manchester has had an actress whom the town could take an interest in, in whose development it could take pleasure, and in whose position when she reaches London it could feel a pride. Miss Coghlan has already made herself a favourite, and has attained the highest honour Manchester has got it in its power to give—the censure of its *Guardian*.

MANCHESTER TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES.

[FINAL ARTICLE.]

WHEN we wrote our article on the Licence Amendment League, we thought that Manchester Teetotal and Temperance Societies, at least the principal ones, had all been noticed. A letter from the Rev. Wm. Stanyer, M.A., both reminds us that there is yet another society to be mentioned, and also somewhat severely criticizes our former notices. The society Mr. Stanyer represents is called the Licence System Amendment Association. Sir J. H. Selwin Ibbetson is its vice-president, as well as a subscriber of £50 towards its funds. Col. Akroyd, M.P., also contributes £160, in addition to £240 already given; and we are told that a public meeting will shortly be called, at which Sir Selwin Ibbetson will preside. This association claims to have carried the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869, and boasts of being the first of all the Licensing Reform Associations to obtain legislation for the restriction of the sale of liquors. Mr. Stanyer, the hon. sec. to this society, wishes it to be widely known that Sir Selwin Ibbetson is its peculiar property, and that the M.P. is not officially connected with any other body. "The new Licensing measure for next session will be introduced into the House of Commons under the auspices of, and will be promoted by, the Licensing System Amendment Association." The London offices are at 18, Parliament Street, Westminster, where, likewise, other of Mr. Stanyer's societies have their London home. The Manchester offices are in City Buildings, Corporation Street.

As to the history of the L.S.A.A. we know very little, and have been able to learn less. Doubtless, it may be a valuable association, and may have done all it claims to have done, but we fail to perceive its *raison d'etre*.

Perhaps on closing our series of Temperance articles we may be allowed to make a practical suggestion or two, which, if carried out, may have the effect of temporarily curtailing the incomes of a few secretaries or lessening their number; but which will be received by all honest temperance reformers as a great boon. Let a conference be held of members of the executive councils of all our societies, who are neither secretaries nor honorary secretaries, and who hold no paid office. Let those representatives bring as it were their "platform" with them, and then let an amalgamation take place between those societies which are merely rivals. The effect of such a conference would be that at least two-thirds of the societies with curiously similar name, and which claim to have performed curiously similar feats in the House of Commons, and whose secretaries, when writing to the papers, lead the public to suppose that they are on the same curious terms of intimacy with Selwin Ibbetson, and all introducers of bills on license reform, are useless institutions, or worse than useless. Rightly or wrongly the public is beginning to think that many of these societies exist only for the purposes of their paid staffs. The keen rivalry which exists between them is ridiculous, and it has not uncommonly happened that when one society has held a public meeting in a town, another society has followed with the collecting box immediately afterwards.

In reply to the charges brought against us by the Rev. Mr. Stanyer, we gladly print his letter verbatim, only suggesting that it is customary to address the editor and not the publisher on such matters. We have never coupled the Rev. Secretary's name with Mr. Taylor's except when it might fairly be coupled. Mr. Taylor left the Diocesan Temperance Society to join Mr. Stanyer; and then he left Mr. Stanyer to organize a society, all to himself. Mr. Stanyer and Mr. James Taylor are altogether persons of a very different mental calibre, and we should never think of joining them together. "A strong partizan" has not been allowed to write the articles. Indeed, they have been written by an entirely neutral pen. In the course of the inquiries we have been obliged to make, we have come on much we can honestly admire, as well as a great deal we would gladly, if we dare, expose.

LETTER FROM MR. STANYER.

Sir,—In an article in the *Sphinx* this week, my name is identified with the National Union for the Suppression of Intemperance, which Union is alluded to in disparaging terms, and has been so for some weeks past. Having no connection whatever with it, and wishing to steer clear both of Dr. Garrett and Mr. J. Taylor, I shall feel obliged if no further use is made of my name. I have already suffered some annoyance, and had to enter into much correspondence. Will you kindly allude to this in your next issue?—Truly yours, W. STANYER.

P.S.—There is much that is not true in the article, and it is evidently written in the interests of the Licence Amendment League by a strong partizan.

THE CAT.

Yet shall poor Tom find pleasant weather.—DIBDIN.

THE cat, *felis molrowlicus*, is a subject on which nearly everything concerning it has been said, and on which it is next door to impossible to say anything new. In a discursive sketch like the present, it is proposed, figuratively speaking, to do little more than touch upon the veriest tip of its tail. From the earliest dates—and earlier—he has been a considerable and influential member of society, and has met with all sorts of luck, and plenty of each sort, getting more than his share as a rule. The ancient Egyptians thought ever so much of him, and at the close of his earthly career embalmed and preserved him religiously. According to popular rumour he is now-a-days seasoned and done up in sausages. Popular rumour is often a thundering old fool, and may be so in this instance; yet, many estimable people who rate popular rumour at its true value, don't seem to care much for sausages, but this is merely a coincidence.

When a cat's feelings are one too many for him he shows that one in his tail, which grows to a great thickness, being at such times as much as three-quarters of a pound of good solid cat the better for sausagistical purposes. Cats have never been made so much of since the time of the Pharaohs, excepting by a few antiquated spinsters, generally Egyptian-looking enough to be taken for resuscitated mummies. Formerly this partiality for cats used to get the poor old virgins into trouble, but it does not signify much in these days. There is only verbal roasting to be afraid of, and there is a chance of surviving that. The cat, as the stay and comfort of matured maidenhood, developes into a pampered, petted plaything, lives a lazy, uneventful life, and mostly dies of over-feeding. If he survives his benefactress he becomes a legatee, and lives in the bosom of some family whose interest it is to prevent him going off in a plethora. It is to their credit to say he never

does, but goes on living with impunity; and cases are on record of an endowed cat outliving two or three generations of his keepers.

The average age of an average cat is about as long as he can dodge three hundred and sixty-five mortal dangers a year. When he attains the age of five it says volumes for his agility. It is well for the cat that the Society for the Repression of Human Ferocity give half an eye to his welfare. One of the mainstays of the British Constitution being the instinct to kill something, anything, everything mostly, it will be clear that the British cat must administer his quota to the nation's greatness. And ever since there has been any British Constitution to speak of the cat has been tried and not found wanting. There are more old-fashioned English recipes for killing a cat than for cooking a potatoe, and very much more variety in them. Also, there are more old sayings and proverbs concerning cats than any other animal wearing four legs and fur, and all more or less inimical to them. Had the gifted mortal who invented the saying that cats have nine lives been, as the reward of merit, skinned, peppered, turpentined, singed, rammed, jammed, slammed, smashed, and finally roasted before a slow fire, the cast would still have a long balance of cruelty against him, for every monster with a taste for cat torture—and his name is legion—has acted on the hypothesis of the saying being real science, and gone for eight and three-quarters of the nine lives. The saying is, of course, wildly hyperbolical, but the cat nevertheless does possess astonishing recuperative powers; and unless a man is well assured of having finished him effectually, in which case he must eat him, he ought not to feel injured at meeting his victim early next morning in an interesting state of convalescence. Most of the proverbs and sayings about cats are as foolish as the above-mentioned, but none of them get within gunshot of it for atrociousness.

From a scarce old black-letter volume, lent to us by *one* of the proprietors of the British Museum, the following extracts have (not) been made. They serve to show the ancientness of the animus against cats. *Fyts-Stephens Manlie Britysshe Sportes and Pastymes.* 1499.

"Toe mayke a Wylle offe ye Wyspe. Tayke a catte. One with plentye offe fvrre and a Tomme ys beste. Ys oake hym ryght welle yn Spyrrite offe Tvrpentyne or as some saye offe Ginne over proofe—sometymes therevnto y called Olde Tomme. Lette a lyghte be sette vntoe him when YE FUN WYLLE COMMENCE. Note. Thatte thysse emprysement ys best conductedde out offe doore on account of ye insayne amayze offe ye catte.

Toe mayke a Deville among ye Tayleors. Chuse a fyne black catte. Place vpon hys feet one large cockel shelle on each foote by reason offe Bvegvndie pytche or cobler's wax either wyll doe. Droppe ye catte adoune ye chimlie offe a room wherein ye tayleours are all atte werke. Ye clatter offe ye cockel shelles ys thatte ye tayleours y thinke ye devill hymselfe ys yn theyre mydste."

The natural history student is warned against making these experiments on account of the officiousness of the society before-mentioned.

The cat is praised for sagacity, and, having no impracticable theories about self-abnegation and "doing unto others," he is all the clearer headed in the straight-sailing matter of doing all he best can for himself. Individuals of the human species often get considerable credit for sagacity on the same premises. With all his vicissitudes of fortune, chronic ill-usage, and daily peril, the cat comes up smiling—if he is a Cheshire cat, on the broad grin—and laughs the vagabond old proverbs and things to scorn.

Some of his troubles are of his own seeking and making, his close and long intimacy with man having damaged his normal simplicity of character. He can swear, spit, bear malice, and stop out all night like a Christian. When he stops out all night and doesn't "come home till morning till daylight does appear," he turns up simultaneously with the matutinal milk, a saucerful of which at such a juncture being the cat's equivalent for the brandy and soda of two-legged disreputableness. It is no more use to point out the errors of his ways to a cat than to an elder son with an established latch-key. He looks at you as if he knew all about it; winks his lustreless eyes with slow deliberation, and yawns like a gap in a hedge; but he won't keep decent hours when he has no mind to, and he seldom has a mind to until his character and constitution are irretrievably gone to—blazes.

Infant mortality is great among cats. Cats can swim and kittens too, but it comes very hard on the kittens. The playful and amusing kitten is the tender beginning of the grown-up, selfish, worldly-minded cat. The legitimate calling of the cat is mousing, and when not out on the spree he contrives to do a little work, just to keep his claws in, and can spot a mouse like a pot-maniac coming down on a bit of Crown Derby, or a burlesque writer on a new pun. When pleased and at peace with creation he makes a noise like distant malt grinding. This is not an involuntary sound. As the burlesque writer would probably say, he does it on pur-puss. (Please, Mister Editor, not to cross this one joke out; there are no more in the paper.) The cat is a vocalist, possessing a voice of considerable range, compass, and sweetness. He prefers serenades to *matinées musicale*, and sings in choice Italian. His great successes are generally in concerted pieces, and his adagios are reckoned something wonderful. Owing to the wretched state of musical education in England, the cat is not appreciated as he ought to be. He seldom gets bouquets thrown to him. The writer has just flung a boot-jack out of the window to a fine baritone Tom from next door but two. But after all a boot-jack is but a poor substitute for the floral favour, and it will perhaps be as well to fetch it back and owe him a bouquet.

TOWN TALK,

AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

THE CATHEDRAL TOWER.

THE lightning flash which struck the tall chimney stalk in Victoria Street, and damaged some of Mr. Warwick Brookes's valuable property, has conferred a favour on the community. The Corporation, whose property it was, have wisely resolved not to rebuild the chimney, and now the massive tower of the Cathedral is seen in all its noble proportions to much greater advantage than previously. As one comes over Victoria Bridge, from Salford, the eye is no longer offended by the ugly chimney stalk, which formerly spoiled and marred all the beauties of the tower.

CATHEDRAL REFORMS.

The reforms consequent on the expected resignation of St. George's, Hulme, by Hon. Canon Whitelegge, have received beforehand an unexpected check. Canon Marsden is said to have made up his mind to accept St. George's, and also continue to hold his present living. The Canon, we believe, holds that the living being attached to a canonry, does not come within the scope of the Pluralities Act, and that legally, although holding his present living, St. George's, and the Canonry, he will not become legally a pluralist. Of course, the question will come before a legal tribunal, and so, if the costs come out of the Cathedral revenues, some of our Manchester clergy will have to deplore a still further reduction in their incomes.

OUR HEAVY DEATH-RATE.

Manchester and Salford have lately obtained an unfortunately prominent position in the death-rate lists. This prominence has brought forward a report from Dr. Syson, the Officer of Health for Salford, in which plain-speaking is conspicuous. From this report we learn that in some districts of Salford the death-rate actually exceeded 100 per 1,000 per annum. The report is evidently written to prove the criticism, and if it attains its object it will amply repay the evident trouble its compilation has entailed. At all events, the opinions broached claim support or demolition.

SHAKESPERE AND THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SPHINX.

Sir,—The *Sphinx* of last week contained a remarkable criticism upon *The Merchant of Venice*, concerning which I should be glad to be allowed to say a few words. In this article your critic scoffs at the "wild impossibility" of the story, sneers at the ignorance of law displayed, and, with the exquisite refinement of a mind which demands live horses and real locomotives upon the stage, observes:—"But, after all, what does an absurdity or two extra matter in a play where two young women are allowed to usurp the functions of a court of justice under the disguise of men, bamboozle even their two lovers, and impose upon a shrewd, old, money-lending Jew." In a similar spirit De Quincy

once criticized the opera, ridiculing the absurdity of making mutual protestations of fidelity in an elaborate duet, or of storming a citadel in a semi-chorus. A cartoon of Coreggio's hangs above me while I write, representing the head of a child. I cannot truly say that I ever saw a living child quite like it; and if your critic saw the drawing, I doubt not that he would exclaim, "Impossible! the rigorous taste of the day would not tolerate such an imposition for a moment; the time for such things is passed now that we have the truth and beauty of tinted photographs." And yet I have heard my friend Technos observe of this same custom—"How beautifully true as a type of childhood, a type of the grace, the innocence, the beauty, the gracious possibilities of all childhood." So strangely do great men differ when discussing æsthetics! If challenged, I suppose we must candidly admit that we none of us ever heard a man talk like Macbeth, or Othello, or Hamlet; or knew one, when agitated, behave like Lear; or met witches so superior in powers of prognosis, or possessing such properties of ærial solution, as those that Shakespere writes of. On the other hand, we must equally admit that, in the nice society plays of Mr. Robertson and Mr. Boucicault, we are never presented to a character whom we do not meet with every day, or witness incidents more improbable than supernatural powers of diving and jumping. After this, is not your critic justified in speaking as he does of the great progress of the drama, and demanding which of the two holds the mirror up to nature—Boucicault or Shakespere?—I am, sir, yours, S. M. B.

Sep. 26, 1871.

[It is ingenious of S. M. B. to try and pin us down to Boucicault, but we prefer to take our stand by Sheridan." No one can justly charge the *Sphinx* with advocating realism. Realism is not nature. Nor is making women pass for men. It is supposing an impossibility. If there is anything impossible about the child's head mentioned by our correspondent, it is bad art. As for operas, they make no claim to being natural. It ought to be remembered that our critic spoke of Shakespere's composition as a stage play, not as an imaginative work. Plays, as imaginative works, have dreadfully declined; as acting plays they have as much improved. The first essential of a drama is that it shall suit the stage; and so the drama, as the drama, has improved: which is precisely what our critic said. It is not fair to pit the worst example of the modern school against the best example of the ancient; neither is it fair to judge a school by its most impotent disciple. We might just as reasonably argue what a feeble power is irony, because it is so feebly wielded by our correspondent.—ED.]

ORDSALL HALL.

A few weeks ago the Mayor of Salford publicly appealed to his townsmen to invite him officially to call a public meeting for the purpose of acquiring Ordsall Hall and its surrounding fields as a public park. Many letters have been written, all to the same purpose, but as yet no requisition has been presented. Were the matter a miserable political squabble as to whether our city arabs should be groomed with Catholic, Protestant, or Dissenting curry combs, many would have been the signatures to as many requisitions; but as this is merely a matter concerning the health of a very large number of our working people, and in which it is impossible to sectarianize, no party has taken it up, and so the chance of obtaining a great good at a little cost is well nigh lost.

THE NEW EXCHANGE.

In a paragraph about the opening of the New Exchange in our last week's issue, some remarks occurred respecting the Master of the Exchange and the country subscribers. We are bound to state that the assertion made by us regarding the Master of the Exchange is entirely inaccurate; that it is contrary to fact, and ought never to have appeared; and we sincerely and unreservedly regret having given currency to it.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Correspondents who desire the return of unaccepted communications should enclose stamps for the postage. Orders for copies of the *Sphinx* and back numbers should be addressed to the Publisher and not to the Editor.

No notice can be taken, in the Number for each current week, of any communication received later than Wednesday morning.

PHOTOGRAPHY & PHOTOGRAPHERS IN MANCHESTER.

PHOTOGRAPHY, as photography goes now-a-days, is well represented in Manchester. Our atmosphere is none of the clearest, and it is full of dust and dirt, yet in cleanliness and an absence of rottenness the photographs printed here compare more than favourably with those of such towns as Liverpool, Birmingham, Chester, and even Scarbro' and Brighton.

Photography is an art or science, or both, very little understood by the public at large. Pure photography is very little practised, and on this account it does not pay. When daguerreotypes went out of fashion, unsophisticated photography bid us adieu for ever. Glass pictures—that is, a picture on a film of collodion spread on a glass plate—succeeded. At first, in skilful hands, these collodion pictures promised worthily to supply the place of the daguerreotype, but the temptation to cover defect by tinting and painting grew too strong for the majority of artists to resist, and so nobody regretted the next change in fashion, which was inaugurated by the carte de visite. This last fashion still holds its sway, though much modified as to size and treatment. The daguerrotype was always truthful, and, although only visible at certain angles, always refined. The glass photographs were sometimes nearly as delicate, and then of course as truthful, but as a rule they were heavy, dull, and even when untouched untruthful, through faults in the manipulation. The paper pictures are a strange mixture of delicacy, untruth, and vigour, and therefore the public like them. In a paper picture you have nature—*i.e.* the truthful lens—and the flattery of the artist combined. The lights and the shades are worked up by hand, and exaggerated or softened as the case may be. The eyes are brought out, and wrinkles and moles and stray hairs are erased. The result is that while the likeness loses in individuality it gains in effect.

That these strictures are true a glance at the show-cards of our leading photographers will at once prove, and the ingenuity with which each tries to specialize his forte is after all highly commendable. Lafosse does not copy Warwick Brookes, and Wake, Eastham, Brothers, and Mudd have all strongly-marked lines of their own, whilst McLachlan steps equally apart from all his fellows. Perhaps Lafosse and Warwick Brookes approach the closest, and yet the works of the two could never be confounded. Both have a specialty for cartes. The sitter is placed at a short distance from the camera, and the result is a large—too large for the card—picture. A pronounced and rather strained attitude is selected, and with great tact the sitter is made to assume the twist or turn at which he or she shows to the best. The negative is then worked up, as we have before indicated, and what with stippling and etching, a print is at last obtained like and yet unlike the sitter. The general outlines are there, but the quality is gone, and with Lafosse the tailor is greatly magnified, and the clothes come out truly gorgeous. Both Lafosse and Warwick Brookes have been very successful at exhibitions, and many medals decorate their manly breasts. When either of these artists steps into oil he fails egregiously, and becomes common in the extreme. In the last portrait of Mr. Calvert as Richard the Third, by M. Lafosse, there is less stippling than in any print we have previously seen.

In St. Ann's Square we find, striving in eminent rivalry, Wake, Mudd, Eastham, and Brothers. Mr. Wake has, in a professional journal, boldly challenged his right, as an artist, to improve nature, but we prefer his untouched specimens to the improved species. Quite recently Mr. Wake seems to have taken great strides, and has almost become *facile princeps* of St. Ann's Square. As pictures simply, some of Mr. Wake's cartes of the characters in *Richard the Third* are absolutely charming, and those miniatures which Mr. Wake has himself worked in colour are beautiful. Mr. Mudd is well known for the delightful atmosphere with which he contrives to fill his pictures; and even the printed back of the cards—the sun rising and setting—is a little gem in itself. Mr. Brothers has made himself known to all England by his scientific work, and he is moreover photographer to the Holbein Society and also to the Rosicrucians. The *Athenæum* lately strongly criticised the Holbeian productions, and Mr. Brothers as strongly replied, but the *Athenæum* had the best of it. To our mind, Mr. Brothers does too much at his work for it to be scientifically correct. This of course is a matter of opinion. Of Mr. Eastham perhaps the highest compliment we can pay him is to

describe his work as sound. In touched-up and untouched work he can equally shine, but, like Lafosse, when he ventures into oil combinations, he is lost in a sea of vulgarity.

The last photographer whom we have space to mention is one of whom we are all proud—Mr. Lachlan M'Lachlan. Mr. M'Lachlan hangs out no show-card, but yet he is well known. In his ordinary business he goes in strongly for clean, untouched, or rather unworked, prints. Non-natural defects Mr. M'Lachlan claims the right to blot out, as also mechanical defects and pin-holes. Beyond this, nothing, according to his creed, must be touched. If any of our readers wish to see a model carte-de-visite print, let them procure a copy of a carte of Mr. Percy, the artist, or one of a lady whose fair head is wreathed in gauze. It is chiefly as the photographer of the giant picture of the Cotton Relief Committee that Mr. M'Lachlan is known out of Manchester. This is a carbon print, and is the largest photograph ever yet taken. We will not attempt to describe it here, for it demands an article to itself. Mr. M'Lachlan is now engaged on a similar picture of the members of the Royal Family.

Perhaps the most truthful of our local photographers is Mr. Reston, of Stretford, who certainly has produced very good work. As likenesses, the specimens we have seen are excellent, and deserve careful study, even from our Manchester photographers.

[HOLIDAY NOTES AND RAMBLES.]

ALL ROUND YORK MINSTER.

THOUGH we love the woods and fields more than the crowded streets, it is always a source of peculiar delight to us to ramble about an old cathedral city. A city with a history must always be more attractive than one of mushroom growth. So at least we thought when we ran down the other day to look at old Eboracum. We were staying in the Vale of Mowbray, which lies some thirty miles to the north of York, when it occurred to us that it would be a pleasant change from pastoral scenes to wander for a few hours about the old city. So one morning we took the train at the nearest market-town, and, after slipping along between villages and "happy autumn fields," were in due time set down within its walls. The railway station is just inside the walls, and the trains run in and out along the iron roadway through an open gate formed by a graceful Tudor arch. In such fashion

> The old order changeth, yielding place to new.

By the way, that line from Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur* suggests the recollection that this Ebraue of the British Brigantes is associated in its memories with that noble knight and stainless gentleman. The old chroniclers tell us that after the Romans had left, Uther Pendragon hoisted here his standard of "the dragon of the great Pendragonship," and following him came princely Arthur, who, after subduing the Saxons, kept here at Christmas a merry yule-tide, the first festival of its kind kept in England, which in its heavy drinking so demoralized his knights and retainers that their arrows failed to pierce the fur doublets of the Saxons, whereas they had before struck through their iron armour.

Leaving the railway, we direct our steps in the first instance to the Minster. To reach this it is necessary to cross the Ouse, which divides the city, and is spanned by two bridges—one of old construction belonging to the age of stone, and named after the river; the other an offspring of this later age of iron, and known as Lendal. Taking the latter as the nearest, and standing upon it, one gets a general impression of the city's aspect and situation. The stream is broad, and bordered by wharves or staithes dotted with craft. From these the houses rise on either side, and spread over the flat shores, showing a wavy expanse of roofs of purple slate and red pantiles, broken by church towers and spires, with the Cathedral rising up grandly on the north side, "lifting from out the populous city grey cliffs of lonely stone into the midst of sailing birds and silent air."

Passing through streets clean, well ordered, and eminently respectable, we reach the Minster; but, before entering, pause at the Catholic Church of St. Wilfrid, built at an angle of the Cathedral Close. Roman Catholicism, displaced from its more magnificent shrine, has built for itself a place beneath the shadow of its former home, and dedicated it to that saint who, centuries ago, found the cathedral of St. Peter in decay, and restored it mainly by his own efforts. Stepping in at the open door, about which funeral carriages are waiting, we get a glimpse of a service for the dead, highly effective in its incidents and grouping. The interior is richly ornamented with paintings and sculpture. The altar is lighted, and before it is a coffin, over which bends a venerable grey-haired priest, clad in rich vestments, who repeats the Latin ritual, while too and fro he swings a burning censer. About him are white-surpliced acolytes and attendants with crucifix and candles. In the body of the church are the dark forms of the kneeling mourners and friends.

We are not going to describe the Minster, into which we went for prayers, for the reason that it has been often and variously done already, though, before we enter, we stand for awhile to look at the west front, remembering that Ruskin has spoken contemptuously of its towers as "eight pinnacled things which are mere confectioners' Gothic." However that may be, it is, to use his own words, pleasant "to look up at the deep pointed porches and the dark places between the pillars, where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered and grey and grisly, with heads worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shapes, and coloured by the deep russet orange lichen, and so higher still to the bleak towers, so high above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries." Passing with something like awe along the mighty pillared nave, we reach the choir as the verger throws open the gates for morning service. This obliging functionary courteously conducts us to a richly-canopied stall, one of many ranged on each side of the choir, and in close proximity to one with the word "Stillington" carved on it, suggesting memories of Lawrence Sterne, sometime vicar of that place and prebendary of York. Joining in the service, we have now a recollection of worshipping luxuriously in a sanctuary made beautiful by art, of sitting in the softened light that came through a magnificent east window, and hearing a *Te Deum* and an anthem gloriously sung to the accompaniment of a mighty organ, whose

> Thunder music rolling shook
> The prophets blazoned on the panes.

And especially among the choir do we remember a youth with a sweet clear treble voice, that at times rose above the organ and all other sounds, whose delicate face and light tufted hair might have formed a model to the carver who carved those angels above us, who looked down

> With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breast.

Service over, we ascend the great central tower and look down through a blue veil of smoke upon the city clustered below, and mark the thin grey line of the ancient wall, and within it the broken space where the river flows, with the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey on its banks, and beyond the wall the houses melting away into the fields; and further out, studded with towns and hamlets, the great vale of York stretching away to the east and west hills. Descending, we commence our walk with a survey of the Cathedral Close. The houses at one time reached to its walls, as they do in continental towns, but a space has been cleared—paved on one side, and with fresh green grass and trees on the other. To our mind a cathedral should always rise from a broad open space of smooth shaven grass.

On expeditions of this kind we always dispense with a written guide, preferring to get first a general impression of the geography of a place, and then wander about in meditation, fancy free, so that interesting objects may come upon us in the form of pleasant surprises. Such a surprise we get when walking along a street which leads from the cathedral. We stop before an old building with a projecting story, supported by quaintly carved wooden figures, and surmounted by a steep overhanging roof of red pantiles. Through an archway, with a heavy nail-studded door, we enter and find ourselves in a paved quadrangle, with the same steep roofs and projecting stories as without. In the upper story are diamond-paned windows, some of them open, and gay with flowers, and on the opposite side is a corresponding archway leading to a broad staircase. Asking a little fellow the name of the place, he lisps out that it is "Taint Tillum's Tollitt's Tware," which we afterwards find means, St. William's College Square. This was formerly the residence of the cathedral clergy, founded for that purpose by Edward IV. Here, in 1642, Charles I. set up a printing press, and commenced a paper war with his enemies, which soon after resulted in

a real one. A little beyond the college is a small dark shop in this narrow street, where Hudson, the railway King, sold drapers' wares before he entered upon those daring speculations, which, in their temporary and brilliant success, furnished Carlyle with the materials of that satire, known among his *Latter Day Pamphlets*, as "Hudson's Statue."

What strikes a stranger most in York is the number of old churches crowded within the walls, each one a mine of wealth to the antiquary. You stumble upon them continually in all sorts of odd corners and in the quaintest forms, and of every conceivable kind of architecture; some with steeples, others with Norman towers roofed with pantiles, and others again without steeples or towers. Here is one in Stonegate, built upon the site of a temple of Diana; there another in the Market-place, built with the bricks of the Roman city, on whose steeple they once hung out a lantern to guide travellers by night through the forest of Galtres. Here again is one that shows the marks of rough usage in the Civil Wars, and is known as the broken church. Then, too, near the south gate is one with Roman bricks in its walls, and a stone in the yard with the initials R. T., said to contain the remains of Richard Turpin. It stands by the road along which that renowned highwayman must have come, if he ever did that famous ride to York. In some places the churches seem to have disappeared altogether, and in walking along the streets you come upon strips of grass-grown graveyards with deserted tombs.

Threading our way among the streets, or rather gates as they are mostly called, we note that the city's history is recorded in some sort by their names. Goodramgate is as old as the Danish occupation, and was the residence of the Danish warrior, Gudrum. Jubbergate, upon which we stumble accidentally, and find ourselves in a close, confined region of old clothes, was the Jews' quarter. Here the Shylocks of the city dwelt, and in Cœur de Lion's time came to grief in an awful fashion. A story is told of how, when Richard I. was crowned, two wealthy Jews of York, Benedict and Jocenus, went up to London with presents for the king. Along with all other Jews on similar errands, they were forbidden to mingle with the crowd at the coronation. Disregarding orders they with other Israelites went to see the show, and being detected by the Christian populace were set upon and beaten. Benedict was taken prisoner, but Jocenus escaped to York, only however to meet a worse fate. The worthy citizens of York who owed money to the Jews, hearing of the attack in London, thought it a fitting opportunity to get rid of their creditors. Straightway they planned a murder grim and great. The Jews, Jocenus amongst them, fled with their possessions to Clifford's Tower, the ancient stronghold, the ruins of which stand within the castle walls. Here they were besieged, and, finding escape impossible, a large number of them, by the advice of their rabbi, set fire to the tower, cut the throats of their wives and families, and then their own, Jocenus setting the example first by sacrificing his family and then himself. Those who remained fell into the hands of their enemies, and though they offered to become Christians, were slain. Their good Christian neighbours and debtors then hastened to the minster, broke open the chest containing the bonds given to the Jews, and destroyed the evidence of their debts.

Full of like story and tradition are these streets through which we walk, had we space or inclination to dwell thereon. Quaint, too, are many of them in their domestic architecture, though, in this respect, perhaps not so marked as Chester. Sufficient, however, is left of curious carved gables, high-peaked roofs, and other irregularities of the Gothic form, to make one almost disgusted with the plain-faced, painful monotony of the modern buildings which have sprung up beside them. One little reminder of a bygone time we meet with which is worthy of note. It is a large extinguisher placed beside a door, which was used to extinguish the light in the days of link boys and sedan chairs. Fine old hostelries there are, too, in the streets through which we walk, some of them with furniture and associations centuries old, stately and grand yet, but statelier in the days of mail coaches and post horses.

Making our final circuit of the walls and gates we come upon Micklegate bar with its Roman arch, perhaps the most interesting of all the four that remain. Commanding the approach from London it was here that the heads of traitors and prisoners of war were placed. Upon its summit, after the battle of Wakefield, was stuck the head of that Richard, Duke of York, of whom in *Henry VI.* Shakespere makes the haughty queen Margaret say—

> Off with his head and set it on York gates
> That York may look upon the town of York.

Having finished our ramble, in the early afternoon we leave the city with the sunshine sleeping upon its grey old spires and towers, its time-honoured streets and broad river flowing through them, changing yet changeless, as it has done through the centuries, though Roman, Saxon, Dane, and Norman have come and left upon its banks the traces of their lives in memorial names and mouldering stones.

THE TIPSTERS AND MANCHESTER RACES.

ON Saturday last we attended the Manchester autumn races, on what is still called the new Race-course. There was a large attendance, and the Race-course Association must be doing well, pecuniary speaking, for besides the gate-money and the charges for the stands, they let out stools for the day at five shillings a piece, and, judging from the quantities which we saw in use, a large revenue must be derived from this source alone. Unlike the Whitsuntide gatherings, nearly all the people present appear to be more or less sporting characters. Before leaving town we had duly provided ourselves with a copy of the *Portentous Bell*, which, by means of large placards all over the town, recommended all who wished to know winners to consult Battledrum, "the only reliable prophet." On the knifeboard of the omnibus we amused ourselves by reading the grandiloquent effusions of the *Portentous* in praise of the "honest tipster," slyly winding up with a recommendation to that worthy to use the "wide publicity" which the *P. B.* "now enjoys," as a vehicle for his advertisements. Having got over the "buttered thunder" of the *Portentous's* leader, we next turned to the vaticinations of "the only Reliable" Battledrum, which we read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested.

Inside the enclosure, while looking out for some of Battledrum's tips, we had the good fortune to meet with an old racing acquaintance, who informed us that some of them had already left, and were half way home to their respective stables. Having jocosely asked our sporting friend what we should do in the backing line (having about as much intention of backing any horse as of riding it), he looked at us with a comical expression, and replied, "Do! why nowt," and immediately left us to the *P. B.* and ourselves. The tips of the *Portentous* on Saturday, and the results, were as follows:—

PROPHECIES.	RESULTS.
De Trafford Handicap. "May fall to Pretty John or Callifœdia."	Neither started. Two ran. Won by Infidel.
Juvenile Stakes. "Should be carried off by Underhand filly."	Underhand filly started at 3 to 1, and was not in first three.
Stamford Plate. Calvados or Claret Grove.	Won by Ida. 4 to 1 against Calvados. 5 to 1 against Claret Grove.
Selling Handicap. Ticklish.	Ticklish started at 7 to 4 and came in third.
Heaton Park Cup. Dr. Temple or Prince.	Neither started.
Scurry Stakes. Ushant or Alderley.	The latter started at 3 to 1 and Ushant at 6, and won.

On the last race, therefore, Battledrum named a winner, but by the time the last race arrived we should think his followers, if he had any, must have been getting tired of the goodly fellowship of the prophet; and if they had backed his tips at the odds to be got, must have lost considerably, unless they had gone on doubling their stakes at an alarming rate. No doubt the *Portentous* will say we know nothing at all about it, and that people should not back horses until they are certain they are going to start. Precisely so; but then the *Portentous* professes to know a great deal, or why does he publish his precious tips? If people are not to back horses until their names or numbers are hoisted, what becomes of his perpetual boast that the horses he predicted to win, but which did not, "saw good hedging." There may be, for

anything we know to the contrary, and doubtless there are, hard-working, honest tipsters; but if their tips are such wonderfully "good things," why on earth don't they keep their valuable information to themselves, instead of blazoning it forth to the world, and go and make fortunes right off? The *Portentous* sneers at the Manchester daily papers for having excluded the tipsters' advertisements, recommending people to back certain horses, and invites their custom. The fact is, that in coming to the resolution which they did, the Manchester daily papers did a very meritorious action, which, while it deprived themselves of a large source of revenue, conferred a benefit upon the community, and met with the approbation of the general public. We are no enemies to British sports and pastimes, horse-racing included; but we are opposed in every way to facilities being afforded, and inducements held out, to all manner of people to back horses, as an easy method of making money. The tipsters must be sacrificed for the general welfare.

[STUDIES IN NATURAL HISTORY.]

THE TOWN COUNCILLOR.

IT is the lot of this functionary always to be born into official life at a very gloomy period of the year. Thus, when the autumn holiday is over, when grouse shooting is over, when the pick of the partridges has been picked, when lawyers grope their way to their chambers again, amidst a fog that might almost be sliced, then the merry bells are set ringing, and we remember the First of November, and each face grows bright as the blush of morn, for at that date the Town Councillor is born.

I feel it almost necessary to give a little fantastic flourish as a preamble to this discussion, for I know the topic will be considered a dry one, just as the Town Councillor himself is a dry one, very often. I don't exactly mean thirsty—though even there he can accommodate the public—but a man of an arid turn, not undulating, with no pleasant little dells in his disposition, no cosy nooks and corners in his mind; but rather like Salisbury Plain, where you can see an idea coming up, as a solitary traveller against the horizon, a long way off. Be good enough to observe that this is not my notion, but that of society at large. Society regards a Town Council as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. In the first place, Society—adopting the ethics of the age, and measuring the Town Councillor by that standard—says to itself, "Here, in this person—this Councillor—you are bound to have either a knave or a fool—a fool, because he works for the public without pecuniary reward; or a knave, because he pretends he makes nothing out of the transaction, whilst all the while he may be earning in a clandestine manner."

I once was a Town Councillor myself, and, adopting the current public appraisement of that species, was very much astonished to find that the Town Council was not a den of gentlemen that shall be nameless. What ought to be done with a man who would speak disrespectfully of a Churchwarden? Could anything crown the infamy of a lifetime more conclusively than the disparagement of a Churchwarden? Well, my estimate of a Town Councillor is that he is as good morally and mentally as the average run of Churchwardens. No one expressed surprise when I became a Churchwarden, but nearly every one did when I became a Town Councillor. I was glad to be favoured with their candid opinions, because in inviting you to the glass of early morning's sherry, they put in, as the saying is, "pretty well of bitters." "I should have thought, my dear boy, that you had possessed a soul a cut above a Town Council!" This was the conciliatory phrase of a blinking City Justice only just made, and not very strong in his mental spine, because every time he thought you could hear a grating noise as of a rusty door. This was his intellect revolving on its own axis. If he had been a real donkey, he would have brayed with his nose in the air after having made that remark to me, just to have cleared out his system for the next thought. Probably a conscientious man would have taken the city justice argumentatively in hand, and desired him, for instance, to define the relative positions of justice and councillor—wherein the former transcended the latter in the eyes of men and angels, whether the angels wept over the councillor and cried glory over the justice, and whether the latter had a greater chance of inheriting the kingdom of heaven than the councillor.

A conscientious man would have tackled the city justice, and tried conclusions with him statistically, by means of printed returns, and so on, but I thought it would be disrespectful to bandy phrases with the worthy magistrate, and consequently I partially fell in with his humour, and told him that, as Her Majesty's Government had not selected me for the skilled occupation of fining my fellow creatures five shillings for being drunk, I was obliged to enter the Scavenging department of Public Life. "What do you do in the Council?" said Blinker, J.P. To which the writer of these presents replied: "When not engaged in imprecation we make depreciatory remarks about the Town Clerk. Occasionally we toss for sixpences, and, on slack days, we go through a play of Shakspere—the part of Macbeth by the Mayor, whose emphatic way of declaiming "damned be he who first cries hold, enough," is very much admired during the mayoral dinners. These are our chief occupations in the Town Council. All the real hard work is done by hired philanthropists and humourists, occasionally assisted by the clergy and the city justices, who, when other people are lazily in bed, attend to the lighting, paving, and sewering of the streets, care for the safety of the shops by a well-organized system of police, see that the health of the city is maintained, and that the revenues of the dean and chapter are not unnecessarily reduced. So that you perceive I made it clear to Blinker, J.P., that the Town Councillor had nothing whatever to do except to be sneered at by the well-informed and well-educated jewellers, drapers, bankers, and others, who, one and all, declared that they never meddled in municipal matters, and that they felt a profound contempt for those who did. Some jewellers, bankers, and drapers make a small capital to themselves morally by sneering at municipal offices, as though they would say, "Small fry these, my masters, not germane to *our* intellectual status. They grovel: we soar. Mean they clearly must be, or they would not work for nothing. However, the proper government of a little place like Manchester must be child's play to a draper, and we could do it easily ourselves by driving about on a second-hand hearse for an hour a week, and giving directions from between the plumes."

Conscious that a Town Councillor in the ordination of Providence must be immeasurably inferior to a jeweller, a banker, and a draper, and that although these latter were all getting rich out of the community, yet that they refused to take any interest whatsoever in the good government thereof, believing no doubt that municipal arrangements would come of themselves, falling like the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath, I retired from the Council and became respectable. I hope now, having qualified for a superior drapery, mercery, and funerals neatly conducted business, that some one will call the attention of Mr. Bruce to my lustrated condition, and that I shall be made a City Justice right off. Our gracious Laureate, in his bright *Maud* poem, has said—

> For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were more
> Than to walk all day, like the Sultan of old, in a garden of spice.

Therefore, desire not, admire not, the office of Town Councillor; but round about the spice garden go hand-in-hand with the honest tradesman, whose rarified intellect enables him to say that he is a cut above the common councilman, and that he would prefer to pay his rates into a horse trough in St. Ann's Square, so that the corporate officials might go and help themselves without the intervention of his Worship the Mayor in Council assembled.

KATE, run and get another packet of CLARKE'S ORIENTAL INSECT POWDER to kill the moths. It drove all Mrs. Jones's cockroaches away; and you know what a many bugs and fleas we had, and how it killed them like magic. Sold by chemists, in packets, 1d., 3d., 6d., and 1s. each; wholesale, Blossom-street, Manchester.

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MANCHESTER.
Every Evening, at Seven o'clock,
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Prices as usual.

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Every Friday and Saturday, until Saturday, October 28th, 1871, RETURN TICKETS, at the following low fares, will be issued from the undermentioned Stations to BUXTON, MATLOCK, AND MALVERN, by any of the Ordinary Trains, available for returning by any Train up to the following Monday Evening.

Stations.	FARES. To Buxton. 1st Cls.	To Buxton. 2nd Cls.	To Matlock. 1st Cls.	To Matlock. 2nd Cls.	To Malvern. 1st Cls.	To Malvern. 2nd Cls.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Manchester	6 0	4 6	9 6	7 0	24 0	18 3
Stockport (Tev. Dale)	5 0	3 6	8 6	6 0	22 0	16 0
Stalybridge	5 0	3 6	9 0	6 6	23 6	17 6
Guide Bridge						

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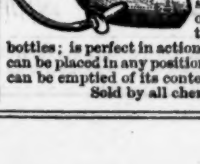

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